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## THE WILDNESS OF THE WAVES

BY THEODORE PURDY

*With original illustrations by Reginald Cleveland Coxe.*

"DOWN EAST," along the Massachusetts coast, the goings and comings of the fisher-folk occupy far more attention than we, of manufacturing centres, imagine. Those hardy mariners along the shore from Cape Cod to Cape Ann, both love and dread the sea; by its help and from its depths comes their bread, and to its savage and unmerciful fury, they must, perhaps, sacrifice their lives.

They are a sturdy race, these fishermen, but the history of their lives has been too truly "written in tears." Many a clumsy old fishing-smack has finished long since with this life's work, and its bones, whitened on the beach, give an almost too pathetic evidence of the furious revenge of an offended sea.

It is not at all wonderful that the artist, the truth-seeker, the color-lover, should be irresistibly drawn to picture the sublime grandeur of the ocean; it is not at all odd that he should be fascinated by its alternate calm and frenzy, and wish to revel in the inexhaustible variety of this untiring model.

Reginald Cleveland Coxe is a close observer of the sea and of its numberless moods; he has spent many summers at Eastern Point, Gloucester, studying the mysteries of the waters, the dash of the spray on the rocky coast, and, if we may judge from this series of reproductions of his paintings, he "dearly loves a fight," and takes special interest in the wildness of the sea, rather than in its calmer phases. The story of his first picture is that of an "oft repeated tale," of which he shows us at a glance, the main dramatic tableau. Out of the mist appears the fishing-boat, clothed with whirling spray and lashed by the unmerciful waves, its



OUT OF THE FOG

sails filled by the gale, its nose raised above the boiling water, while, from the deck, the sturdy captain strains his eyes, on the outlook for danger. The whole scene quivers with vital interest, and through it all one can imagine the morning-calm of the starting, and the weary waiting of those tearful ones on the shore.

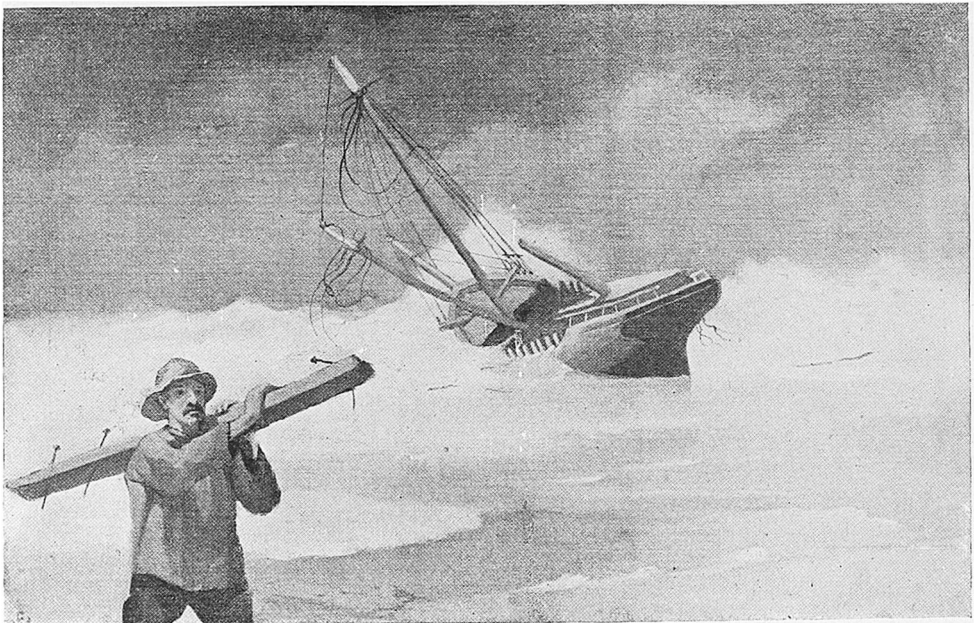
In spite of the dramatic force of this picture, it is not in the least theatrical or false; Mr. Coxé has been merely truthful, intensely serious, and quick to seize the all-important moment for his suggestive tableau.

One of the most difficult and trying phases of nature to catch and fix, is this same water-movement and cloud-action; it is, perhaps, even more technically impossible than that of securing the effect of light and shade in landscape work.

The unending action, the everlasting movement of the water, the constantly changing color-tone and scheme, perplex and annoy the student and make the task a hard one, even for the master. No kinetoscope is able to measure the action of the spray or of



THE COSTEN LIGHT



THE WRECK OF THE SCHOONER

waves, the delicate changes in the curves and colors of the latter ; and it is only through the millions of eye-photographs alone, that one can fathom in the least degree the wonder of their motion and the beauty of their lines.

Mr. Coxe has exhibited for several years at the annual exhibitions, and while he does not confine himself to marines, as his many excellent portraits have indicated, still he has rather inclined toward making this study of the sea his special pleasure. He was born in Baltimore and studied first in the schools of the National Academy of Design, and later under Bonnat, in Paris.

The influence of this master is clearly shown in Mr. Coxe's picture " Ready for the Bath." This admirable nude presents, in its beauty of line and grace of pose,



THE LIFE-BOAT

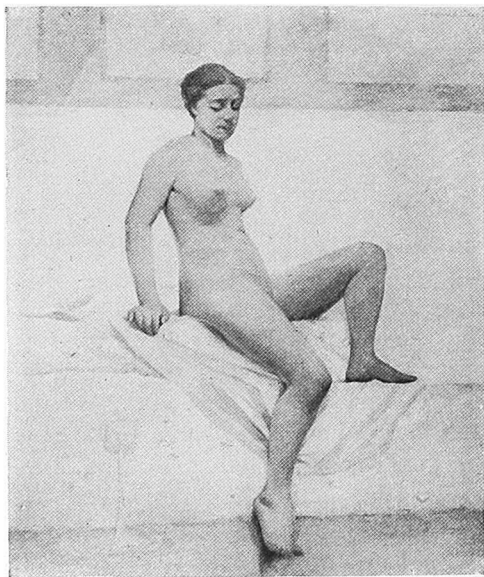
a direct contrast to his other sketches, which, of necessity and very properly, give less emphasis to detail and more to the important effect of color and mass. It is, however, in such pictures, as the " Costen Light " and " The Life-Boat," that the artist's individuality and personality are better shown, and he has been most happy in the latter sketch in his choice of the moment for a pictorial climax. The scene is laid at Barnegat on the New Jersey coast, and one shudders instinctively at the sight of the plunging life-boat, rushing headlong into the seething mass of angry water, manned by sturdy oarsmen, the steersman ready with his sweep, at the next descent into the trough of the sea, to keep the boat head on.



MORNING AT BARNEGAT BEACH

The scene is intensely dramatic, and honors the bravery of those who risk their own lives, deliberately and unselfishly, to save their fellows.

The "Wreck of the Schooner" is a fitting end to the battle; the waves still lash the helpless victim, yet the passing clouds give every promise of coming peace, and finally the "Morning at Barnegat Beach" is the calm after the storm. In this instance the reproduction gives one a clear idea of the original painting, even hinting at the color-scheme in the cold beauty of the sand and sky.



READY FOR THE BATH—A SKETCH

Throughout this series of wave-wildness, one is especially impressed with the seriousness of the artist, and charmed by his dramatic action. Mr. Coxe tells his story completely, and yet does not exhaust the subject. His interest is not strained or unreal, but natural; and above all this, the story is not the sole end; the wonder of form and mass, the awful frenzy of the wave and the weird beauty of color, dominate even the dramatic action of the storm. It is the poet's, as well as the artist's sense of a picture.

"The gray sea and the long black land;  
And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
And the startled little waves that leap  
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
As I gain a cove with pushing prow,  
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand."